A REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE BRITISH NATION.

Saturday, October 20. 1711.

THE Affair I am upon of the publick News, Treaties of Peace, Propoſals, and Preliminaries, are like to take me up a great deal of Time; but as I know you love ſome little Intervals in all Things of Length, I have ventur'd to make this Paper a Digreſſion about Witches and Witchcraft, and ſhall return to the Subject again.

It is not ſo much for any Weight in the Queſtion before me, that I enter upon a Deciſion of this kind of Doubt, or from the Importunity of the Sender, from whom I have ſeveral Letters, too long to inſert here, and whoſe aim in it I do not foreſee; as it is from the Atheiſtical Uſe which many People make of this Difficulty, and which it is evident, they wiſh ſhould be a Difficulty, by the Pains they take to make it ſo.

The Queſtion is, whether there is any ſuch Thing as a Witch?

The Letter which the Enquirer has ſent me on this Head, I publiſh'd before, *Review* N° 83, and need not repeat it here, it being too long for this Paper, and not uſeful in the Repetition, farther than to tell you, that the Author deſires my Opinion againſt

gainſt *La Hontan*, *Webſter*, and others, who Ridicule the World for believing Witchcraft, or that there was any ſuch Thing as a Witch in Nature.

It is true, that it would be a very odd Thing that our Laws ſhould Empower the Judges to Condemn, and the Civil Magiſtrates to put People to Death for *Witchcraft*, if there were no ſuch Thing in the World; and that therefore, if it were really a Doubt, it would be neceſſary to bring that Difficulty to a ſudden Solution.

The Author has put me upon Enquiring into the Arguments on either ſide, between *Glanvil*, *Webſter*, *La Hontan*, and others, who Object, Anſwer, and Reply, *ad infinitum*, about this Matter; and one tells me with Aſſurance enough, that none but our *Europeans* are ſo weak, as to believe any Thing about it —— But throwing all theſe Authors by, as Reaſoning againſt Foundations and Principles, confuting Demonſtrations, *and the like*, which is a part of Logick I never was taught, I muſt cut the Queſtion ſhort, thus.

1. What is underſtood by a WITCH?
2. What has the Scripture in it, towards the Proof of *Witchcraft*?
3. What Demonſtrations are there of the the Thing, in common Experience?

1. For it is moſt neceſſary to underſtand and explain the Term, before we can begin to Argue upon it—— *What is underſtood by a Witch?*

All the Commentators that I have read upon the Word, as uſed in Scripture, agree; That it is One in Covenant with the Devil, and uſes his help to deceive or hurt others. *See Pool's Annot. on Levit.* 18. v. 10. I ſhould think it were very abſurd, to aſk me if there were ever any ſuch; after God, in his Original Inſtitutes to the Children of *Iſrael*, by his Prophet *Moſes*, had told them expreſly in that Text, v. 10. *There ſhall not be found among you*, &c. *an Inchanter, or a Witch, or a Charmer, or a Conſulter with Familiar Spirits, or a Wizard, or a Necromancer* —— See what follows, v. 12. *For all that do theſe Things are an Abomination to the Lord, and becauſe of theſe Abominations, the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee.* Again, *Levit.* 19. 31. *Regard not them that have Familiar Spirits*——.

Does not this undeniably prove, 1ſt. *That ſuch are*; becauſe, ſuch that are ſo, *are an Abomination to the Lord*; Would God have expreſs'd his Abhorrence and Deteſtation of ſuch, if there were not, or could not be any ſuch Thing in the World? 2. That there were ſuch among the *Canaanites*; for becauſe they were ſuch, the Lord had driven them out before the Children of *Iſrael*.

But I think we have a farther, and undoubted Teſtimony of the Fact, which puts this Caſe yet farther out of Diſpute, *viz.* In the Caſe of *Menaſſeh* King of *Judah*; of whom reckoning up his abominable Crimes, it is ſaid thus —— *Alſo he uſed Enchantments, and uſed WITCHCRAFT, and dealt with a Familiar Spirit, and with WIZARDS.* 2 Chron. 33. 6.

Will any Man after this, aſk us, if there is any ſuch Thing as a *Witch* in the World? I think the Queſtion muſt firſt, of courſe, ſet aſide all Scripture Teſtimony; and this tends to abundant Atheiſm, which is the true Reaſon why I mention theſe Things, which none but thoſe who can Invalidate Scripture and Divine Authority will Diſpute.

But as ſuch are daily to be found, who Ridiculing all the Accounts of Things in the Holy Bible, take this for no Argument; therefore I do not go on to New-Teſtament Evidence, ſuch as to *Simon* the Sorcerer, and to other Evidences of that kind; but God is not without his Teſtimony, from the Mouths of thoſe who have been Convicted of Witchcraft in all Ages, and have confeſs'd, that they have had a Familiar, or Perſonal Converſe with the Devil, with whom they have enter'd into Hellish Compacts,

Compacts, Covenants, and Combinations, for the Hurt and Deluſion of themſelves and their Fellow-Creatures—— And theſe I take to be good Evidences againſt the Devil in this Caſe; it would be endleſs to enumerate theſe, and bring Inſtances; but the Records of Juſtice are full of Inſtances in all Nations, of the Truth of this, particularly in *England*, *New-England*, and in *Scotland*; and this, I reckon, amounts to Demonſtration, as far as we are able to obtain Demonſtrations of ſo dark a Matter: For the Confeſſions of many of theſe wretched Creatures, have amounted to giving Evidence againſt others, and to bringing ſuch Particulars, as they have not only convinc'd the Hearers, but the Perſons themſelves, nay, even the Devil himſelf, has been oblig'd to give his Conceſſion, and acknowledge the Fact.

It would fill this Paper full of a vaſt Variety of Stories, to amuſe and amaze the Reader, to go on to Particulars in this Caſe, but as I am only enquiring into the General, it is not the Buſineſs of this Paper, it is enough, that there is abundant Teſtimony, both from Scripture and from Criminal proceſs of the Truth of it.

That there are, and ever have been ſuch People in the World, who converſe Familiarly with the Devil, enter into Compact with him, and receive Powers from him, both to hurt and deceive, and theſe have been in all Ages call'd *Witches*, and it is theſe, that our Law and God's Law Condemn'd as ſuch; and I think there can be no more Debate of the Matter.

MISCELLANEA.

IN thus diſcuſſing this Point, *viz.* Whether there are ſuch Things as *Witches* or no; and *who are Witches*, or Dealers with Familiars: It cannot be amiſs to hint a little to you, who *are not Witches* among us; and had I Room here, I might be very merry with this Particular.

And firſt, I am perſuaded Parſon *Higgens* is no *Witch*, in his new Conduct in *Ireland*, any more than he was in his Sermon at the Chappel Royal, that either he ſhould think that Sermon would not be Reſented by Her Majeſty, at a Time when the Queen had juſt expreſs'd her Willingneſs, not to have thoſe Points Debated among us—— Or that the Bench of Juſtices would bear his bidding them have a care they did not provoke him ſo; as to make him forget he was a Clergy-Man, *Anglicè*, *lay by his Gown and fight them*.

Nor do I think the Mayor of *Plymouth* a *Witch*, no, not in the leaſt degree, who in order to put a Mad-Man into a vacant Church there, over the Beſſies of the Corporation, whoſe known Right it is, has broken open the Town Cheſt, and ſtole the Corporation Seal, to affix to a ſham Inſtrument of Gift to the ſaid Clergyman: If he had been a *Witch*, his Devil would have told him, That as ſoon as ever the Recorder and Corporation had found out his Knavery, they would uſe him as he deſerv'd, which, it ſeems, they have in part done; having taken the Freedom to diſpoſſeſs him of his Chair, and chooſe one, that it is hoped will be more a Witch than he, to Govern in his ſtead.

Neither do I think the Clergy-Men of *Colcheſter Witches*, in their Eccleſiaſtical Capacities, who rather than they would let an Honeſt Neighbouring Clergy-Man Preach in their Pulpits, becauſe a little more Moderate than they deſir'd he ſhould be:

be; had neither so much Manners to the Chief-Magistrate of the Town, as to give him leave to choose a Man that he lik'd, to Preach before him, or regard enough to the Work of God, as not to choose rather to have the Introduction of a Mayor be made without a Sermon, than that it should be Preach'd by a Man they did not like.

Our Modern Politicians too, who form Partition-Treaties, Clandestine Negotiations, and Articles of Peace for us, and talk of Things being Sign'd that were never thought of, make it appear that they are no Witches, and in the Case before them, know nothing at all of the Matter.

We have abundance of People among the *October-Men* of this Age, who have given us full Proof of their not being at all Guilty of Witchcraft. *Quæ nunc prescribere longum est.*

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Printed for and sold by *John Baker* at the *Black-Boy* *Pater-Noster-Row*. 1711.